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SUBJECT: HCMC POLICE CONTACT ON TIP CONCERNs

REF: HCMC 90; B) 06 HCMC 437; C) 05 HCMC 1299

¶1. (SBU) On February 23, PolOff met with Colonel Hoang Tan Viet, Deputy Director of Criminal Police of the HCMC Ministry of Public Security (MPS) to follow up the status of the investigation into an international trafficking-in-persons ring that reportedly involved over 100 Vietnamese women from the Mekong Delta and Tay Ninh province (ref B). According to Colonel Viet, 13 traffickers associated have been prosecuted in the case. The MPS has identified 73 additional individuals who are alleged to have participated in the TIP ring as recruiters, transporters, and document procurers. Of these 73 individuals, 13 reside outside of Vietnam. As the investigation still is underway, he would provide no further details at this point.

¶2. (SBU) Talking more generally about TIP trends, Colonel Viet said the MPS is becoming increasingly concerned that traffickers are exploiting marriages of Vietnamese women to foreigners to conceal TIP. He said that the MPS now believes that up to ten percent of the approximately 40,000 marriages in southern Vietnam between local women and Taiwanese men since 1995 resulted in the women being sold either into sexual slavery, forced into other marriages, or otherwise exploited. In 2006, he said that MPS investigated three cases in which Taiwanese men paid the families of Vietnamese women USD 4,000 to marry the women. Once the couples arrived in Taiwan, the men sold their wives to brothels for USD 5,000. MPS learned about these incidents from the women involved, who were able to escape and file complaints with Vietnamese authorities. MPS is working with Interpol to try and prosecute these men, but have so far received no cooperation from Taiwanese authorities, the Colonel noted. (Comment: Per ref C, Taiwanese officials in HCMC acknowledged that, prior to 2005, they were lax in vetting marriages of Vietnamese women to Taiwanese men. Since instituting much tougher interview procedures, they asserted that the number of fraudulent marriages has dropped sharply. End Comment.)

¶3. (SBU) Colonel Viet said that the MPS is compiling a national composite list of women who have gone absent from their legal residences for extended periods of time "without proper reason." The list is based on inputs submitted through the MPS chain of command from the local provincial level. Another MPS contact estimated that approximately 11,000 names are on the nationwide composite list thus far.

¶4. (SBU) Viet said that international traffickers rely on domestic counterparts to procure women in Vietnam. These local counterparts usually are persons with criminal records and traffic not only persons, but drugs and other contraband. These domestic traffickers use recruiters, who work in the local communities, transporters, who bring TIP victims to HCMC and smuggle them out of Vietnam, and

document procurers, who obtain actual or fake travel documents for TIP victims. Once out of Vietnam, the international trafficker steps in to shepherd TIP victims to their final destination. Viet confessed that, at this point, MPS is limited to going after domestic traffickers and their "satellites" because ringleaders flee, or reside outside of, Vietnam.

¶ 15. (SBU) Viet stressed that GVN relies on bilateral agreements for investigatory and judicial cooperation to tracking down, arrest, and prosecute international traffickers. Nevertheless, extradition and repatriation remain difficult. For example, cooperation with Malaysia, Colonel Viet complained, is slow in coming. In the Ref B case involving roughly 100 women trafficked to Malaysia, the GVN has sent several diplomatic notes to the GOM seeking the repatriation of TIP victims, but thus far has received no response.

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